

PROJECT
EMPOWERMENT PLUS

625 H STREET, N.E., WASHINGTON, D.C. 20002

PROJECT EMPOWERMENT PLUS
2004 ANNUAL REPORT

second**chances** *at success*



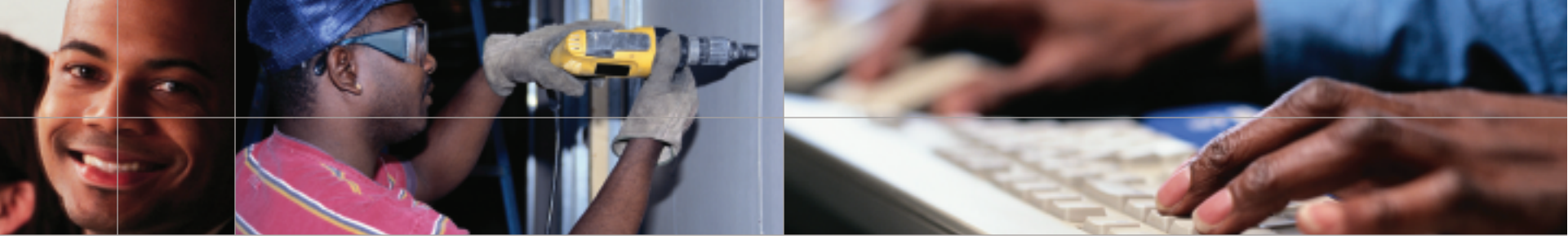
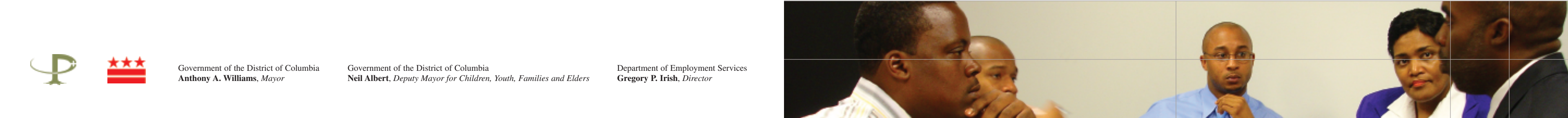


TABLE OF CONTENT

Introduction from the Honorable Anthony A. Williams <i>Mayor, The Government of the District of Columbia</i>	4	A Program is Launched. Lives are Transformed.	11
Letter from Neil Albert <i>Deputy Mayor for Children, Youth, Families, and Elders</i>	5	Community Help. Renewed Hope.	12
Letter from Gregory P. Irish <i>Director, Department of Employment Services</i>	6	Our Participants	14
Letter from Charles S. Jones, <i>Director, Project Empowerment</i>	7	Transformed Lives In Action	17
The Facts: Ex-Offenders and Employment	8	How We Work	19
Our Mission: Ensuring Second Chances	9	Partnerships	20
Preparing A New Path.... A New Day	10	The Benefits to Employers	21
		Where We Go From Here	23

STAFF

Neil Albert <i>Deputy Mayor for Children, Youth, Families, and Elders</i>			
Gregory P. Irish, <i>Director, Department of Employment Services</i>			
Diana Johnson, <i>Director, Office of Public Affairs</i>			
Project Empowerment Plus District of Columbia Department of Employment Services 625 H Street, NE — First Floor Washington, D.C. 20002 202.698.5599			
Program Director Charles S. Jones	Case Managers Sharon McCoy LaKisha Lewis Eleanor Farar DeCarlo Washington	Job Developers Wendall Harris Edward Moody Pearlene Murray Frank Crawford	Social Services Staff Rahim Jenkins, <i>Executive Office of the Mayor</i> Cheryl Cook, <i>Department of Health</i> Clifton Robinson, <i>Department of Mental Health</i> Eydie Whittington, <i>CSOSA</i>
Executive Assistant Patricia Ross	Job Coaches David Cavanaugh Alec Vincent Annie Leonetti Fredric Rainey	Program Facilitator DeCarlo Washington	Design/Copy Cenarios Strategic Marketing & Creative Services, LLC
Staff Assistant Rani Philipose			



Government of the District of Columbia
Anthony A. Williams, Mayor

Government of the District of Columbia
Neil Albert, Deputy Mayor for Children, Youth, Families and Elders

Department of Employment Services
Gregory P. Irish, Director

INTRODUCTION FROM THE HONORABLE ANTHONY A. WILLIAMS

Mayor
The Government of the District of Columbia

Helping every citizen of this great city to achieve self-sufficiency and economic stability has been a driving force of my administration. It matters not where they have been nor what they have done; it matters only that they are truly committed, willing, and ready to improve their lives and become productive citizens of the District of Columbia.

This is the reasoning behind our Re-Entry Initiative—Project Empowerment Plus— an employment-driven program designed to address the social service needs of ex-offenders. Working with the firm belief that gainful employment is the most productive strategy for ex-offenders, we have— thanks to a \$2 million grant from the US Department of Justice and a healthy dose of collaboration, commitment, and community involvement— been able to help more than 200 ex-offenders make the transition from incarceration to self sufficiency.

This has not been an easy task for the District of Columbia. However, we have been fortunate to have strong leadership at the agency and program levels, and the support of the federal government, countless community-based organizations and local businesses. Through Project Empowerment Plus, Deputy Mayor Neil Albert and Department of Employment Services Director Gregg Irish have been able to offer many ex-offenders, who face the possibility of recidivism, hope and a second chance at success.

I am very proud to introduce this year-end report for the Project Empowerment Plus program. This program exemplifies how government—local and federal—can work together with the private sector for the good of the community.

It matters not where they have been or what they have done; it matters only that they are truly committed, willing, and ready to improve their lives and become productive citizens of the District of Columbia.



LETTER FROM NEIL ALBERT

Deputy Mayor for Children, Youth, Families, and Elders

The Project Empowerment Plus program, during its first year, has greatly benefited high-risk youth and juvenile offenders (14-17) and adult felons (18-35) returning to the District after being incarcerated. Established over a year ago to help 283 violent offenders reintegrate into the local community and get their lives back on track, the program gives the needed attention to re-entry and transition services for ex-offenders. It is a city-wide program that helps them to regain independence and confidence, to support themselves and their families, and to participate meaningfully in their communities.

Funded by a \$2 million grant from the U.S. Department of Justice, the program begins with employment, but is uniquely situated to address the comprehensive social service needs of the returning offender. The ability of participants to access all necessary services in one location maximizes the effective, seamless provision of services.

We know that the recidivism rate for prior offenders is alarming. Programs such as PE+ are critical to ensuring criminal patterns are broken so ex-offenders can pursue stable and productive lives. We also know that success of this program would not have been possible without the cooperation and commitment of public, private, community and faith-based organizations that serve as program partners.

In its first year, Project Empowerment Plus has opened doors for everyone—communities, businesses, ex-offenders, and especially the families of ex-offenders. We look forward to many future successes.

Programs such as PE+ are critical to ensuring criminal patterns are broken so ex-offenders can pursue stable and productive lives.



LETTER FROM GREGORY P. IRISH

Director
Department of Employment Services

Much attention has been given to what happens to communities and families in the District of Columbia when residents, many of whom are primary wage earners, are incarcerated. What is not always considered is how a cycle of suffering continues even after ex-offenders are released into the community because they lack supportive services, particularly employment.

When re-entry and transition are given proper attention, families and communities are restored and ex-offenders regain confidence, self-sufficiency, independence, and self-empowerment. This is the end result that this agency strives for. This is the vision that has led to the Project Empowerment Plus (PE+) initiative, a special commitment that has been made possible by Mayor Anthony A. Williams and the Department of Employment Services (DOES) in concert with the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency, the Federal Bureau of Prisons, and a broad community partnership network.

Giving people the tools they need to get their lives back on track is not new to us. The Department of Employment Services (DOES) has already enjoyed outstanding success with the four-year-old Project Empowerment, from which Project Empowerment Plus grew. We have focused not only on the employment needs, but also the human services needs of our employee constituents— in this case, ex-offenders who are ready for a second chance. We recognized that while employment training and job services are the foundation for this second chance, a successful program requires a more comprehensive approach that embraces numerous human services needs as well. This powerful combination makes employers more comfortable and willing to fill their employment needs with workers who are waiting for a second chance.

Studies show that stable lives and sustainable employment are the keys to preventing recidivism. When ex-offenders can successfully transition out of the criminal justice system, they become valuable participants in our communities. They begin earning a living wage and contributing to our tax base, instead of burdening it.

At DOES, our efforts go deep and, we believe, will have a lasting impact on the citizens of this city.

When re-entry and transition are given proper attention, families and communities are restored and ex-offenders regain confidence, self-sufficiency, independence, and self-empowerment. This is the end result that this agency drives for.



LETTER FROM CHARLES S. JONES

Director of Project Empowerment
Department of Employment Services

Launching a pilot program is always challenging. But this year’s launch of the Project Empowerment Plus (PE+) program has been eased by the unique, multi-faceted, and collaborative effort of multiple government agencies, including the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency, the Federal Bureau of Prisons, and over 22 local community and faith-based organizations. I’m pleased to showcase this effort in the following annual report.

From the very beginning, our goal was to minimize recidivism by offering our program participants full access to the resources and services they need to transition into stable, productive lives. We have done that for all of the participants who have come to us for assistance. But beyond providing tools for employment, Project Empowerment Plus also provides participants with tools to get re-acclimated to society and help build a new foundation for their lives. Even the most motivated of our clients can become easily overwhelmed just trying to meet their basic needs. Our program makes participants job-ready and life-ready by helping them obtain such key necessities as:

- Valid Identification
- Housing
- Family Unification and Counseling
- Access To Medical Care
- Peer Support Service

Meeting these basic needs is certainly vital to our program participants. But it is also an important reassurance to our employer-partners that PE+ workers have the support they need to be reliable employees. Our dedicated staff is another important part of this equation. Through our staff’s hard work and dedication, our program participants and business partners enjoy immeasurable success.

The story of our inaugural year is yet another inspiring success for the District of Columbia. Most importantly, it helps to set the foundation for future initiatives that will offer the hard-to-serve constituents of this city a second chance at self-empowerment.

...our goal was to minimize recidivism by offering our program participants full access to resources and services they needed to transition into stable, productive lives. We have done that for all of the participants who have come to us for assistance.



THE FACTS: EX-OFFENDERS AND EMPLOYMENT

- Each year, some 2,500 prisoners return home to communities in the District of Columbia.
- On a national scope, each year, nearly 650,000 people are being released from prison more than seven million from jail. Nearly half of those being released earned less than \$600 per month prior to their incarceration. Their opportunities for employment are significantly diminished once they have a criminal record.
- Many ex-offenders entered prisons with educational and social disabilities. A prison record, compounded by a lack of education, job skills, and emotional stability, makes it even harder for these individuals to contribute to their communities.
- The criminal justice system increasingly has as its mandate retribution and deterrence. Few resources exist to rehabilitate offenders.
- Contrary to public perceptions that most offenders serve lengthy prison terms, the average sentence lasts about two years.
- Despite the wide-spread belief that most offenders don’t want to work and prefer being incarcerated, studies show that offenders who successfully transition into stable employment approach work with an unmatched positive attitude.
- The largely young male population in our prisons means that families and communities in the District of Columbia are left without primary wage earners. When these offenders are released and face lack of support and lack of employment, families and communities continue to suffer.
- Problems ex-offenders face cannot be considered in isolation. For example, lack of housing affects the ability to find and keep a job.
- Trends show that ex-offenders are increasingly returning to prison. As a result, taxpayers have to shoulder sky-rocking incarceration costs while employers scramble to find workers.
- Social stability, including living with a spouse, as well as completion of educational programs have a direct, tangible affect on recidivism rates.
- Pre-release social and employment planning lowers recidivism rates.

ENTER PROJECT EMPOWERMENT PLUS...

OUR MISSION: ENSURING SECOND CHANCES

Project Empowerment Plus (PE+) was created in 2004 as a re-entry initiative for serious and violent ex-offenders. Funded by a \$2,069,997 grant from the U.S. Department of Justice, PE+ is a joint workforce initiative operated under the auspices of the District of Columbia’s Office of the Deputy Mayor for Children, Youth, Families, and Elders, in conjunction with the Department of Employment Services (DOES), the Court Services and Supervision Agency (CSOSA), and several other District agencies such as the Department of Human Services, the Department of Health, the Department of Mental Health, and the Department of Housing and Community Development.

Our program grew out of community-based initiatives to address the lack of social and economic anchors available to ex-offenders transitioning from incarceration to law abiding, contributing member of society. Studies show that approximately two out of every three people released from prison in the United States are re-arrested within three years, if they are not given the appropriate support services to help them fully reintegrate into society. The Project Empowerment Plus program works to minimize recidivism by offering participants full access to the resources, services and support they need as they transition into a stable life. Our work ultimately helps lead participants to regular, steady employment, which can be an overwhelmingly decisive factor in keeping ex-offenders from committing new crimes and returning to prison.

Indeed, helping ex-offenders reenter society and gain confidence requires much more than job readiness skills and job placement assistant—though they are important factors. Our program embraces a holistic approach to rebuilding lives that, in many instances, have been cut-off from mainstream society. Home communities that ex-offenders return to have usually undergone not only a vast physical transformation, but considerable economic, technological and social change as well. Ex-offenders almost immediately face the very real obstacles of navigating this new environment and obtaining the simple basics that allow them to lead functional lives, such as valid identification, access to healthcare, and appropriate clothing for job interviews. Consequently, PE+ focuses first on five key objectives:

- **Valid Identification** — We make every effort to help our participants obtain a valid driver’s license or non-driver’s license ID. To further reduce this hindrance, we assist participants with making payment arrangements for outstanding tickets.
- **Housing** — We ensure that participants receive assistance finding suitable, safe, and affordable housing.



- **Family Unification and Counseling** — Bringing families back together is an important component of our program. We assist participants who need help reuniting with loved ones.
- **Access to Medical Care** — We provide our clients with comprehensive access to quality medical care, including mental health screening. We also assist them with obtaining health insurance and offer rehabilitation services for physically-challenged participants.
- **Peer Support Service** — Our youth offenders are encouraged to take advantage of our peer support services, which emphasize the need to get an education.

PREPARING A NEW PATH... A NEW DAY

From the start, the creators of the Project Empowerment Plus program recognized that the key to helping ex-offenders make the best transition from incarceration to their homes and communities required the right mix of public and private partnerships and community support to bolster the motivation of participants and encourage goal-setting that leads to sustained economic self-sufficiency and restored family life.

Four important elements aided the planning and vision of the Project Empowerment Plus initiative.

1. A secured partnership with federal agencies that allowed for the pre-release identification of offenders and their needs, so that care can be coordinated from prison to community.
2. An aggressive and comprehensive employment strategy that incorporated life skills, educational, and vocational training as well as work experience, job placement, and job retention assistance.
3. An array of wrap-around human and supportive services that addressed the basic life needs including housing, transportation, health insurance, medical treatment, counseling, peer mentoring, and reunification with families.
4. A network of community service providers to provide a continuum of care in home communities to ex-offenders while also reducing service fragmentation and duplication and promoting increased capacity and service linkages.

A PROGRAM IS LAUNCHED; LIVES ARE TRANSFORMED

May 2004 saw the official birth of Project Empowerment Plus and the beginning of a life change for some 283 men and women and their families. By the year's end, all 283 of our clients would hold jobs with leading employers in the area, including Safeway, Aramark, the Department of Public Works, and more. Our participants were placed into jobs in various industries including food service, telecommunications, retail, and construction.

These inaugural participants took advantage of a range of services to help them on their road to economic self-sufficiency. For example, through our program, they had access to important health education workshops on such topics as understanding hypertension, knowing signs and symptoms of diabetes, and how to detect early warning signs of breast cancer. Clients also learned how to plan for further education and, through PE+, were able to take advantage of the CollegeBoard's MATCH system that helps adult learners find postsecondary education programs that best meet their needs and match their lifestyles and schedules.

PE+ adopted the “one stop” approach to services. From our location at 625 H Street NE, we were able to coordinate multiple services in a streamlined and collaborative manner. Such services include:

- Case management with a single case manager
- Life skills and pre-employment training
- Job search assistance
- Placement in subsidized employment to establish a work record
- Mental health counseling
- Drug and alcohol counseling and referral
- Healthcare, Medicaid, and health insurance assistance
- Assistance in family unification and contact with children (if applicable)
- Mentoring and self-empowerment
- Peer support (for youth)



COMMUNITY HELP. RENEWED HOPE.

Project Empowerment Plus is truly an inside-out effort. Although the program is supported through federal funds from the U.S. Department of Justice, resources are channeled through community organizations. The District has over 2,500 ex-offenders returning to the District each year from prisons around the country. But local communities need help building capacity to receive ex-offenders. Often, ex-offenders return to communities that do not have organizations that are equipped with adequate or necessary resources and manpower to help them.

Without intervention, over two-thirds of ex-offenders are re-arrested for new offenses. Without programs to support ex-offenders and integrate them back into their neighborhoods, communities are left vulnerable to the costs and violence of crime.

That’s where we come in. PE+ helps manage the human and supportive services funded by federal grants in our community. The results are powerful. Instead of a handout, participants receive a hand up from their own neighbors. Recidivism is reduced and communities are kept healthier and safer.

Community partners that provide such wrap-around services include:

The Department of Mental Health — Provides individual and group counseling, medical management, psychological assessment, community support. DMH also refers participants with mental challenges to the appropriate treatment facility.

The Department of Motor Vehicles — Provides identification cards.

The Department of Parks and Recreation — Provides recreational and support services via summer camp, a summer feeding program, and 77 recreational sites with various services; and assists program participants requiring day-care assistance for their children.

The Department of Health Alliance — Assists in establishing healthcare coverage and emergency medical appointments for our participants. DHA conducts monthly healthcare workshops and provides referrals for substance abuse treatment.

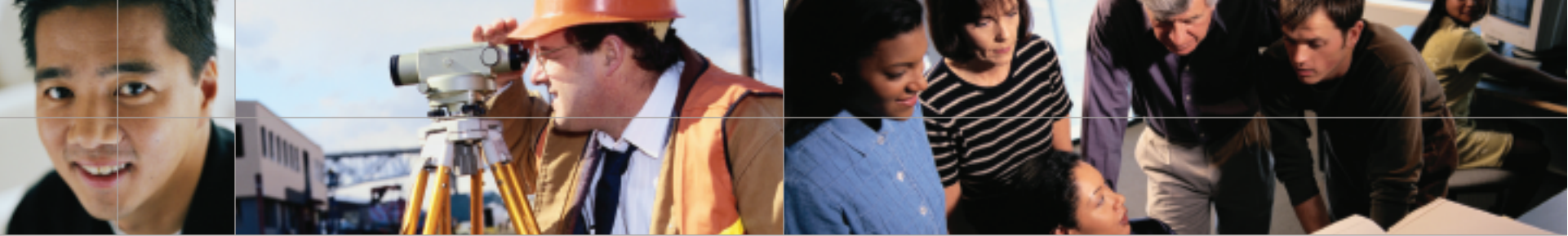
The Department of Health Services — Encompasses programs such as Income Maintenance Administration (IMA), Rehabilitative Services, Family Services, Early Childhood Development, Youth Services Administration (YSA), and Development Disability Council.

The Child and Family Services Agency — Provides access and supportive services through collaborative, child welfare services, family reunification assistance.

Youth Services Administration (YSA) — Provides community-based services via contracted providers for clothing vouchers discharged summaries before release for adjudicated youth, preventive services, rehabilitation and training programs with referrals, identifies juvenile system entry points, therapeutic group homes, and People in Need of Supervision (PINS) referrals.

RE-ENTRY PROGRAM STATISTICAL REPORT

Indicator	PE+	Supportive Services	PE+
Graduated from Life Skills Training	283	Department of Health (DOH)	109
Currently in Life Skills Training	0	Department of Human Services (DHS)	91
Cumulative Unsub	158	Department of Motor Vehicle (DMV)	87
Cumulative Pubsub	215	Addictions Prevention Recovery Assistance (APRA)	6
Re-incarcerated	39	Housing Assistance	12
Inactive	12	Clothing Assistance	105
		Individual Counseling	2
		Occupational Skills Training	20
		Adult Basic Education	31
		Daycare Assistance	6
		Department of Parks and Recreation	1



OUR PARTICIPANTS

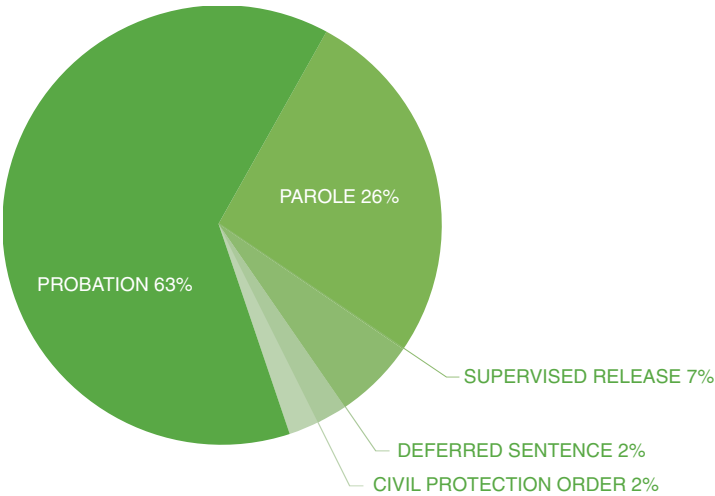
The benefactors of the Project Empowerment Plus program are high-risk youth and juvenile offenders (14-17) and adult felons (18-35) returning to the District after incarceration. Program participants have current and/or prior offenses that are drug-related or violent and have spent at least one year incarcerated. In our inaugural year, we worked with 283 participants - 246 men and 37 women. Their circumstances are all different. Participants range from defendants and offenders under pre-trial release, to those on probation, parole, or under supervised release. Some came to us on their own; others were referred through TIPS (Transitional Intervention Parole Services) and other programs such as CSOSA. But all share the desire to become self-sufficient, productive, contributing members of the community. Consider that 96 of our clients began their engagement with us while they completed their sentences at halfway houses. Our participants are motivated and eager to maximize their potential. The commonly accepted wisdom among our participants is that there are no menial jobs, only menial attitudes.

TRAITS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EX-OFFENDER POPULATION PROJECT EMPOWERMENT PLUS SERVES

Many participants are referred to the program by CSOSA. According to CSOSA’s facts compilation, on any given day, its Community Supervision Program supervises at least 15,000 offenders. In FY 2004 - 2005, the offender population displayed the following characteristics:

Average Age		37 years	Education Level		Less than 10th grade 17.4%
					10th to 12th grade 25.2%
					HS Diploma/GED 38.5%
					Post Secondary Study 18.9%
Race	African-American	89.7%	Gender	Male	84.8%
	Caucasian	5.5%		Female	15.2%
	Hispanic	3.7%			
	All Other	1.1%			

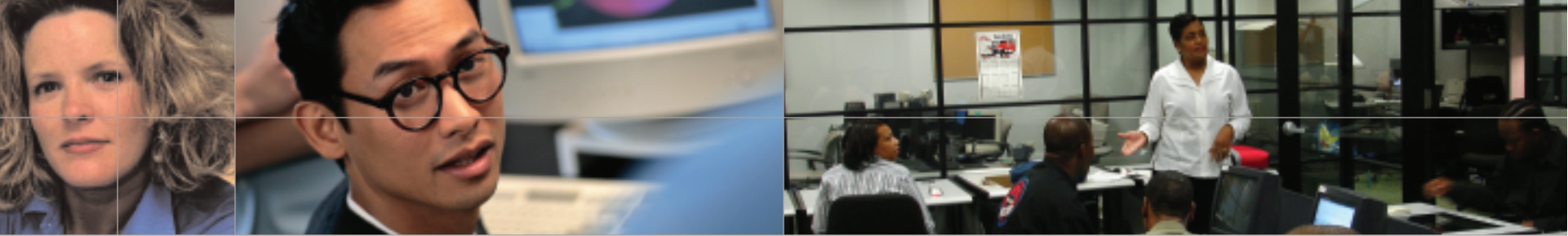
From October 1, 2004 thru May 31, 2005, the distribution of Supervision types for CSOSA offenders was as follows:



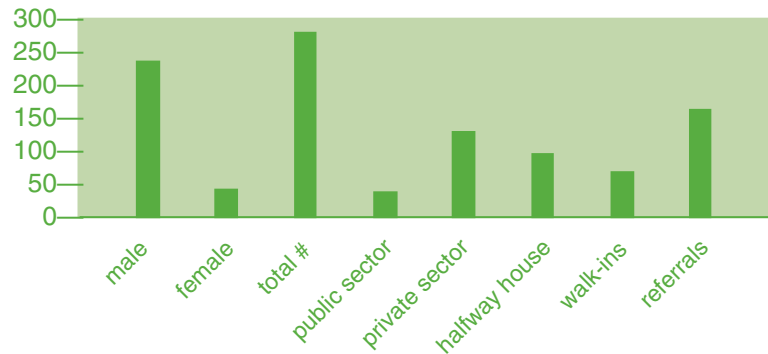
AVERAGE SUPERVISION TERM

Probation	2 years
Parole	7 years (Median)
Supervised Release	3 years
Deferred Sentence	9 months
Civil Protection Order	1 year

Figures and charts provided by CSOSA 2004-05 fact sheet



The chart below reflects the actual number of Project Empowerment Plus participants during the first year of operation.



283 total participants (246 males, 37 females)
34 employed by public sector
124 employed by private sector
96 from halfway houses
59 walk-ins
172 referred from other entities

Our participants seek self-improvement and self-empowerment. They seek success through second chances. And most are well on their way.

- a. Fifty-five percent (55%) of participants have obtained employment. Ninety-three percent (93%) sustained their jobs for one month, eighty percent (80%) sustained jobs for three months, and sixty percent (60%) sustained jobs for 6 months
- b. Participants earn average hourly salaries that range from \$6.00/hr to \$21.00/hr.
- c. Twenty-five percent (25%) of participants are enrolled in higher education or vocational education classes

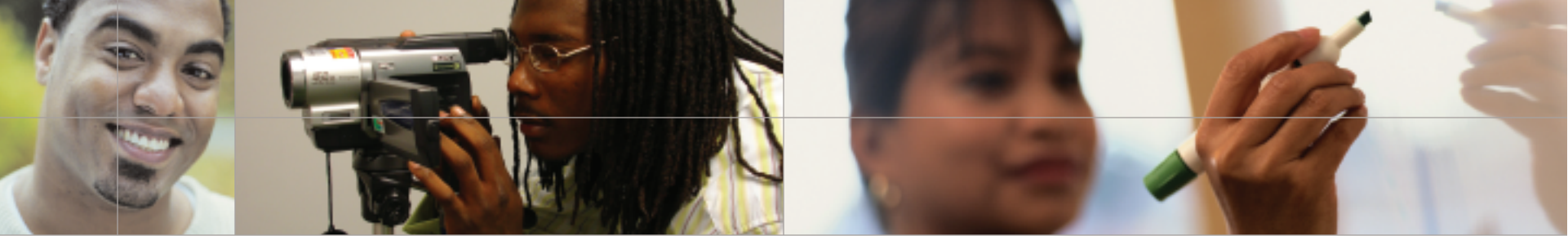
TRANSFORMED LIVES IN ACTION

REGINALD IZLAR

Twenty-five year-old Reginald Izlar began the "Employability and Life Skills Training" with Project Empowerment Plus in January 2005. Although he was initially skeptical about the program, Reginald soon settled in and took full advantage of the opportunities Project Empowerment Plus had to offer. According to Reginald, Project Empowerment Plus gave him the push he needed. "A jumpstart," he calls it—an opportunity that took care of his idle time. He successfully completed his PE+ training in February 2005 and soon landed a job at the D.C. Department of Housing and Community Development. Reginald sees this employment opportunity as the beginning of an even brighter tomorrow. Earlier this year, he applied for and secured the necessary funds to take a seven- month intensive computer repair course. The class meets every work night. Once he completes the course and gets his certificate, Reginald can become gainfully employed as a help-desk technician, making a yearly salary of \$35,000 or more. He will also be qualified to start his own business if he chooses. "It's about really wanting to move forward and not go back to where you've been," he says, reflecting on a past that resulted in three years of incarceration and then living in a halfway house. "Project Empowerment gives ex-offenders another option other than returning to a life of crime," he says. "With so few options out there, this type of program is needed, especially when the incarceration rate exceeds the number of college-bound students coming out of high schools."

DERRICK PAIGE

After six years of incarceration, Derrick Paige, a 32-year-old father of six children, wanted a job that would allow him to support his family and set a good example his children. Derrick decided to take advantage of the resources that Project Empowerment Plus offered. With a "nothing-to-lose and everything-to-gain" attitude, Derrick successfully completed the program in August 2004. Immediately following graduation, he began his work experience with the Department of Public Works (DPW), while enrolling in a Commercial Drivers License (CDL) course. Derrick successfully completed the CDL training and is currently a full-time employee at DPW. With a job that has allowed him to take care of his family, his sights are now set on purchasing a home in the District of Columbia.



SHAKEEM DUNCAN

Violating his parole five years ago landed Shakeem in the last place he wanted to return to—prison, serving a four-year sentence. Shakeem said it was there that he decided to turn his life around – if he had another chance. “The truth is, I didn’t want to become institutionalized,” he said. “I decided then and there that I wasn’t going to nobody else’s prison—no more!”

While serving the remainder of his time at a halfway house, Shakeem learned about the Project Empowerment Plus program and out of curiosity attended an information session. According to Shakeem, what immediately impressed him about the program was that the PE+ teachers were actual motivators. “None of them talked down to us or gave that fake talk. In fact, they discussed real life issues that were very relevant to me. They not only talked about going out there and empowering ourselves, but they really encouraged us to go out there and do something better with our lives.”

With the life and job interviewing skills he acquired through Project Empowerment Plus, Shakeem felt comfortable venturing out on his own to find employment. Within a month, he found a job as a runner at a catering service, making \$8 an hour. In less than six months, he was promoted to a supervisory position and currently makes \$18/hr. Everyday he arrived to work earlier than expected and was eager to pitch in and help. “It didn’t matter that I was only making \$8 an hour at the time,” he said, “I did what was necessary to stand out from the rest and it paid off.”

HOW WE WORK

Project Empowerment Plus believes that a successful program model is one that is highly structured. We have developed a seven-step process that all participants are required to participate in and successfully complete. This is the foundation for obtaining and sustaining gainful employment. Undoubtedly, gainful employment is by far the best re-offending strategy. Work gives structure and, more importantly, meaning to lives that often lack both.

We start with assessing and identifying the basic needs of our clients and take them through the following steps to access work opportunities:

Intake/Referral — We screen applicants that the U.S. Parole Commission, probation officers, and the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA) refer to us and assess their eligibility for the program.

Orientation — We acquaint participants with the expectations of the program, the range and type of support and assistance provided, and the variety of wrap-around support opportunities available. Our orientation takes into account that gender needs are different. For example, women who have regained custody of their children require additional childcare assistance.

Pre-Employment Assessment — We conduct comprehensive screening to identify and analyze the applicants’ interests, hobbies, skills, and abilities. Then we determine if any barriers to employment exist before developing a plan to address them.

Intensive Case Management — We closely supervise directed job search activities and case management assistance, which are designed to remove barriers to employment and encourage personal responsibility and economic self-sufficiency.

Job Readiness Training/Life Skills — We conduct a four-week rigorous pre-employment program, facilitated by professional business managers. To help prepare the program participants for employment, the workshops focus first on specialized skills such as resume writing and job search, which include videotaped mock scenarios of job interviews. Clients also participate in occupational skills training sessions and receive instruction in effective business communications, and time management.

Job Placement — We match applicants with employers and available job openings.



Unsubsidized Employment — We refer PE+ participants with strong business or trade skills and experience to jobs, paid exclusively by the employer.

Subsidized Employment — We place PE+ participants in jobs, funded by the government, to prepare them for unsubsidized employment.

Job Coaching/Support Services — We provide ongoing counseling and support to resolve on-the-job conflicts or difficulties as well as to increase job satisfaction and productivity. Our participants can take advantage of vocational and adult education classes, transitional housing, health care, and in-depth life skills training to help them stay on track.

PARTNERSHIPS

Project Empowerment Plus relies on an extensive network of government and community agencies and organizations that offer assistance to our clients during and after their participation in our program. This federal-state-community partnership includes:

- Office of the Deputy Mayor for Children, Youth, Families, and Elders

Office of the Deputy Mayor for Operations

Criminal Justice Coordinating Council

D.C. Department of Human Services

Youth Services Administration

D.C. Department of Mental Health

Metropolitan Police Department

D.C. Department of Health (Healthcare Safety Net Administration)

D.C. Housing Authority

U.S. Bureau of Prisons

D.C. Department of Parks and Recreation

And countless community and faith-based organizations
- Office of the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice

The D.C. Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency

D.C. Department of Employment Services

D.C. Department of Housing and Community Development

Child and Family Service Agency

Office of the D.C. Attorney General

D.C. Department of Corrections

D.C. Department of Motor Vehicles

U.S. Parole Commission

D.C. Superior Court

Public Defender Service

THE BENEFIT TO EMPLOYERS

Employers who partner with Project Empowerment Plus certainly contribute to our goal of offering second chances to ex-offenders. But it also makes smart business sense: what they get back is as valuable as what they give.

Employers know they can count on motivated employees who have had the necessary prescreening and support needed to be reliable, productive workers. PE+ vouches for the readiness of candidates, which gives employers reassurance that helps dispel the myths and unnecessary anxiety that often go hand-in-hand with employing ex-offenders. And we help remind local businesses that there are countless examples of people in the community with past criminal records who have moved on to rebuild their lives.

The benefits to our business partners are numerous:

Recruitment and Staffing — It is costly, time consuming, and sometimes even frustrating to recruit new staff. PE+ provides a viable alternative -- pre-screened, qualified candidates eager to work and open to overtime opportunities.

Customized Job Training — Before committing to a PE+ worker, employers can custom train candidates for up to 16 weeks and see upfront how a candidate performs. They can assess the ability and attitude of a worker and learn firsthand how PE+ candidates provide added value to their bottom line.

Employee Retention — Our relationships with employers start with removing, upfront, such employment barriers as lack of access to transportation or childcare that often hinder excellent job performance. We continue providing assistance and support well after a placement is made to ensure continued success between employers and employees.

Evaluation — We work to prepare our participants and our business partners for success. To do so, we make sure our job coaches evaluate each new employee’s work performance and are in touch with the supervising manager to ensure a successful work relationship.



Federal Insurance Bonds and Tax Credits — Beyond the value of skilled and motivated workers, our business partners gain significant incentives such as federal insurance bonds and federal tax credits. Business partners who hire our participants are eligible to receive up to \$8,500 in tax credits, per employee, over a two-year period.

What local employers have given— and received in return— is awesome and inspiring. Consider these success stories:

The Alliance of Concerned Men (ACM) is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping at-risk youth turn their lives around through counseling, life skills, and workforce preparation. When the organization’s executive director, Tyrone C. Parker sought qualified employees, he turned to the PE+ program. “I needed individuals with compassion and, most importantly, a special dedication to reach back and make a difference in the community. Project Empowerment had the right workers for this job.” According to Parker, he hired two participants. They possessed the right work ethics and attitude, often going beyond the call of duty to get the job done. “I can’t say enough about the PE+ program,” said Parker. “It’s an excellent concept – one that gives hope to this population and at the same time assures public safety.”

“Current New,” a bulk mail distribution company, provides second chances to Project Empowerment Plus participants by offering an eight week subsidized work experience that subsequently leads to full-time employment. Participants’ salaries begin at \$8.50 per hour, with benefits. Opportunities for growth are plentiful. Program Supervisor, Alvin Williams has been instrumental in providing training and employment options to men and women referred by the PE+ office. As a result of this partnership, several PE+ participants are offered a chance at a new start. “From this pool of employees, I get workers who are committed, dedicated, and want to work,” said Williams. “That, in itself, is an employer’s dream!”

Master Carpentry is a Maryland-based company that specializes in commercial carpentry, working primarily on cabinetry, framework, roofing, and demolition. Patricia Cook, office manager, needed to pull from a pool of committed applicants who would show up to work—come rain or shine. With the boost in the construction industry, moving from one project to the next is quite common. When contacted by a Project Empowerment Plus business outreach officer, Cook said she was ecstatic about the partnership. The company hired several PE+ participants. “What stood out about these workers,” said Cook, “is that they were motivated. They had a hunger to succeed which is evident in their approach to work.” Cook said that she embraced the Project Empowerment Plus program because she believes that people need a second chance. “We all make mistakes,” she says. “Branding someone for life because of a mistake is also a mistake. My company looks to people who are committed, reliable, and driven. Those are the basic qualities of a successful employee and we’ve found those qualities in the people we’ve hired through Project Empowerment Plus.”

WHERE WE GO FROM HERE

Small steps that come with a second chance can lead to great leaps of opportunity. Specialized groups like ex-offenders need customized, tailored employment programs in order to have a second chance at success. As the Department of Employment Services works with the hard-to-serve population, we will continue to refine and refocus efforts to ensure that participants and employers get relevant services from us. We will build upon our successes with programs like Project Empowerment Plus and concentrate our efforts on assisting constituents so they become productive citizens of this society.